

## **Statement of Policies and Objectives**

The Section 8 Program was enacted as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 which recodified the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 (the Act) and included Section 8 as a substitute for the Section 23 Leased Housing Program. The Act has been amended from time to time and its requirements, as they apply to the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program, are described and implemented through this Administrative Plan.

Administration of the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program, and the functions and responsibilities of the Orange County Housing Authority's (OCHA's) staff, shall be in compliance with Orange County's Human Resources Policy, OCHA's equal housing opportunity requirements, and HUD's Section 8 regulations and existing operations/procedures where applicable, as well as all federal, state and local fair housing laws and regulations.

**A. MISSION**

The OCHA's mission for serving the needs of low-income, very-low-income and extremely low-income families in its jurisdiction is the same as that of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. That is to:

Promote adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity and a suitable living environment free from discrimination.

**B. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The overall plan for the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program is designed to achieve five major objectives:

1. To provide improved living conditions for very-low-income families while maintaining their rent payments at an affordable level;
2. To promote freedom of housing choice and spatial deconcentration of very-low-income and minority families;
3. To provide decent, safe and sanitary housing for eligible participants;
4. To provide an incentive to private property owners to rent to very-low-income families by offering timely assistance payments; and
5. To provide guidance in the administration of the programs in compliance with HUD requirements, including maintaining well organized and complete records and facilitating HUD's monitoring and review of the OCHA's operation.

The purpose of the Administrative Plan is to establish policies for carrying out the local Rental Assistance Programs in a manner which is consistent with HUD requirements, but which are not a mere restatement of HUD-mandated policies and procedures.

The Administrative Plan covers both admission and continued participation in these programs. Policies are the same for all programs, unless otherwise noted.

Changes to the Plan are recommended by the Orange County Housing and Community Development Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors, acting as the Board of Commissioners for the OCHA, prior to submitting to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The OCHA is responsible for complying with all subsequent changes in HUD regulations pertaining to these programs. If such changes conflict with this Plan, HUD regulations will have precedence.

**C. FAIR HOUSING POLICY**

It is the policy of the OCHA to comply fully with all federal, state, and local nondiscrimination laws and in accordance with the rules and regulations governing fair housing and equal opportunity in housing and employment.

Specifically, the OCHA shall not deny any family or individual the opportunity to apply for or receive assistance under HUD's Rental Assistance Program on account of race, color, sex, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, age, family or marital status, handicap or disability.

To further its commitment to full compliance with applicable civil rights laws, the OCHA will provide federal/state/local information to program participants and applicants regarding "discrimination" and any recourse available to them should they feel they have been the victim of discrimination. Such information will be made available during the family briefing session and all applicable fair housing information and discrimination complaint forms will be made a part of the briefing packet. The OCHA staff will receive updated training and referral information from the Fair Housing Council of Orange County representatives at least annually.

Housing posters and information which are easily readable from a wheelchair are provided in locations throughout the OCHA's office. Except as otherwise provided, no qualified individual with handicaps shall be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance, because the OCHA's facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by persons with handicaps.

The OCHA's central office is handicap accessible. Accessibility for the hearing impaired is provided by a TDD/TTY telephone service.

The OCHA has bilingual staff to assist non-English speaking families. The OCHA works with organizations who assist hearing and sight impaired persons to provide assistance where needed.

The OCHA will maintain lists of available housing submitted by owners in all neighborhoods within the OCHA's jurisdiction to ensure "greater mobility and housing choice" to very-low-income households served by this agency. The lists will be provided at the front desk, for families who call in, and at briefings.

The Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled, as well as the Community Housing Resources, Inc., and other nonprofit organizations, assist people with disabilities in search of available housing and conduct special projects designed to increase housing options.

For portability families, the referral list will be provided to them after the agency staff has verified with the Initial Housing Authority that they hold a valid Housing Choice Voucher.

The OCHA will review and update its equal housing opportunity requirements to ensure that these objectives are being met.

**D. PRIVACY RIGHTS**

Families will be required to sign the Federal Privacy Act Statement and HUD Authorization for Release of Information, Form 9886, which states under what conditions HUD will release tenant and owner information.

The OCHA's policy regarding release of information is in accordance with these documents.

Requests for information must be accompanied by a written release request in order for the OCHA to release any information involving an applicant or participant, unless disclosure is authorized under federal or state law.

**E. STATEMENT OF LOCAL OBJECTIVES**

There is a critical need for very-low-income housing assistance within the jurisdiction of the OCHA, as evidenced by waiting lists for various housing programs. The OCHA is charged with meeting these needs through housing assistance programs primarily available from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

There is also a need for decent, safe and sanitary housing units available for program participants. There is not an abundance of affordable housing for very-low-income participants within the jurisdiction without the availability of subsidy.

The OCHA approaches the administration of the program with a positive attitude. As a division within the Housing and Community Development Department, the OCHA shares in the mission, "To work in partnership with Orange County's diverse communities to preserve and expand affordable housing opportunities, strengthen economic viability and enhance the livability of neighborhoods." The OCHA establishes realistic and attainable goals and has given particular thought to the numbers of families who can be expected to need and want to move to better quality and more affordable housing.

In establishing goals, the OCHA also has given special consideration to the availability of existing housing. The OCHA has also stressed the setting of attainable goals. This has been achieved by setting goals that do not overburdening the market or force the program on Participants. They are intended to provide a vehicle for those who have a need for housing and those who have available units to come together in a manner beneficial to each.

The strategy is to achieve these attainable goals efficiently and economically, while complying with the Section 8 requirements and regulations. Such strategy and goals are enumerated in the Agency's 5 Year Plan and Annual Action Plan.

**F. RULES AND REGULATIONS**

All issues not addressed in this document related to tenants and participants are governed by HUD handbooks, federal regulations, memos and notices, and guidelines or other applicable law.

**G. REFERENCE**

The Orange County Housing Authority is referred to as the "OCHA" throughout this document.